

THOMAS J. JENNINGS.

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Thomas Jefferson Jennings, an eminent lawyer and Attorney-General of Texas, was born in Shenandoah County, Virginia, in the month of October, 1801. His father, William Jennings, was sheriff of that county for a number of terms, and, in 1808, represented it in the Legislature of Virginia. He subsequently removed to Kentucky and settled in Todd County, where the subject of this sketch was chiefly reared and prepared for college. He graduated with first honors at the Transylvania University in 1825, and afterward taught a school in Tennessee two or three terms, during which he prepared himself for the bar.

In 1828 he began the practice of law at Paris, Tennessee, but shortly afterward removed his office to Huntington, where he entered upon the path of professional distinction in which he continued to advance during the remainder of his life. In 1835 he emigrated to Mississippi and settled in Yazoo City, where he obtained a large and lucrative practice. In 1840 he removed to Texas and located in San Augustine, at that time the Temple Bar of the young Republic, at which many eminent lawyers and judges began their successful career; but having remained one year at San Augustine he located permanently at Nacogdoches, where he practiced in copartnership with Judge W. B. Ochiltree until his talents and ability were recognized and confirmed by official promotion.

In 1852 he was elected Attorney-General of the State, and was re-elected in 1854. He declined a re-election in 1856 against the popular wish that he should continue in that office, and retired to his plantation near Alta, in Cherokee County. But the efficiency of his public services were too highly appreciated to be dispensed with, and in 1857

he was chosen to represent that county in the Legislature.

He was strongly Southern in his views and sentiments and favored prompt and vigorous measures of resistance to the threatening attitude of the incoming administration of President Lincoln toward the institutions of the South. He was a member of the Texas secession convention in 1861, in which, with a conscientious conviction of right, he cast his fortune and sacred honor with the fate of the Confederacy. He was soon afterward stricken with paralysis, by which he was confined to his bed for nearly two years and never fully recovered from the effects of the attack; but having removed in 1864 to Tyler, he formed a copartnership with Thomas Selman and continued his practice there until 1877, when he removed to Fort Worth, which was the field of his last professional labors. He died at the latter place on the 20th of September, 1881.